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The Bride's Kitchen Library

A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Lee Everett, National Broadcasting Company, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, May 27, 1937.

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MR. EVERETT: While your friend Ruth Van Deman is taking her place at the other microphone and getting herself ready to give you another of her weekly Household Calendar talks, I'm going to read one of her letters that came along the other day in the fan mail. And by the way this one has her name spelled exactly right -- V - a - n D - e - m - a - n.

I haven't asked Miss Van Deman's permission to read this letter and I'm not going to. She might say no. So I'm going to do it quick before she gets on the air and stops me -

"Dear Miss Van Deman" this letter starts, "Have listened to Farm and Home Hour for the last five years and have enjoyed every program. Most of all the helpful talks you have given each week. You have guided me over many a rough spot as you have many other young women."

"I have made jelly and canned a few fruits in the past years, starting at the tender age of 12. But I still have plenty to learn and want to know the best way to preserve all fruits and vegetables. My husband is out of work at present and I do want to put in a supply of food for winter if possible. With your help I know I will be able to do just that. Please send me the bulletin about home canning fruits, vegetables, and meats."

That's all of the letter. I see a note on the margin here in pencil that says "Home canning bulletin sent May 24." Well, with that as her guide I hope this lady has 100 percent success with her canning this summer.

Now, Miss Van Deman, I'll let you talk, and if you're going to talk about that boxful of bulletins, you'll have plenty to say.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh no, don't worry, Mr. Everett, I'm not even going to give all the titles. This collection is what I call the bride's kitchen library.

MR. EVERETT: Oh I see. A two-inch shelf of kitchen classics. Everything the housekeeper needs to know.

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, sir. I don't make any such claims. This is the idea. Every now and then an attractive young lady with a very worried pucker between her eyes, wanders into my office and asks where she can get a bulletin to tell her how to take coffee stains out of a brand new linen tablecloth. Or maybe she is in doubt about the correct way to cook broccoli, or make boiled custard. When we give her a bulletin or tell her how she can buy

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the radio cookbook for 15 cents, the worried look begins to fade. Then she generally says, with a very apologetic look, that she's very new and very green at this housekeeping business, and she needs all the help she can get. She never realized before how much you need to know to cook a meal so everything is just right.

MR. EVERETT: How about the young men? Do they ever come in?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Indeed they do, and looking decidedly sheepish at first, until we get to talking about the modern way of broiling steaks or roasting meat. Then they find that science is discovering new things about even such an old subject as meat cookery. And I can just see it begin to dawn on them that mother and grandmother didn't know everything. As we talk along, the real reason for the young man's visit comes out. He's hunting for recipes for his wife to use. They've been married only a month. And before he realizes it he lets it out that she was a swell secretary, and she's a marvelous girl, but she just hasn't had much practice in cooking. Finally we send him off with some bulletins to start her kitchen library.

MR. EVERETT: She'll know how to file them anyway, with all that secretarial experience.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And speaking of filing systems for a collection of home economics bulletins, here's a gift that I've given several brides and found that it made a great hit. Instead of giving them some little kitchen gadget that might or might not be useful, I have bought a small-sized box letter file, just the size to take our bulletins. I hunted till I found some of these box files with green and gold paper on the heavy cardboard. This figured paper doesn't show finger marks so quickly, and it dresses up the box so it looks suitable for a gift.

In between the leaves of the alphabetical file I slide our free bulletins, and right on top I always put a copy of "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes," the cookbook that Mrs. Yeatman and I compiled several years ago. It's by no means a complete cookbook. But it has about 450 recipes and some dinner menus for each month of the year. The recipes are as simple and foolproof as we knew how to make them, and they don't call for a lot of fancy ingredients that a bride wouldn't be likely to even know the names of, much less have in her brand new kitchen cabinet.

This radio cookbook is not on the free list any more. I have to buy it from the Superintendent of Documents' Office, but the price is only 15 cents.

MR. EVERETT: Fifteen cents, Miss Van Deman?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, 15 cents - one dime plus one nickel.

MR. EVERETT: I don't know much about the price of cookbooks, but that seems awfully cheap for 450 recipes.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, of course Government publications are sold for just enough to cover the cost of production. All the research back of them is financed by public moneys for the benefit of the public, so there can be no profit on the sale of the printed results.

MR. EVERETT: Yes, I know. I was just spoofing you. But now on this bride's library as you call it, just how would you suggest getting the bulletins to start it. I know somebody who'd like to do that.

MISS VAN DEMAN: I'd suggest that she ---

MR. EVERETT: Who said anything about she?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh excuse me. I'd suggest that he write to the Bureau of Home Economics in the Department of Agriculture and ask for a list of our printed publications. The ones for homemakers are listed separately under foods and nutrition, textiles and clothing. Ten of these bulletins will be sent free to anybody who requests them. So you can send for the 10 you think the bride will find most useful. And then turn the list over to her and let her order more later.

MR. EVERETT: O.K. And I'll send 15 cents for that book of Radio Recipes, to the Superintendent of Documents over at the Government Printing Office.

MISS VAN DEMAN: One other suggestion, tell the young lady to write to her State college of agriculture also, and ask for their home economics bulletins. They often have the best information on how to use local products.

And one thing more, if you have any money left after you've spent 15 cents for that cookbook, you might buy a set of measuring spoons and a measuring cup to go along with the bride's library.

MR. EVERETT: Say, I might do that - just for good measure.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Strictly on the level. You know the days of a heaping teaspoon of sugar and a scant cup of this and that, are gone. Modern recipes are based on all level measurements. In cakes, and muffins and other mixture of that kind, where you need a certain proportion of sugar, flour, fat, and liquid to give the right texture, measurements must be accurate.

I know there's always somebody coming forward to tell about a wonderful cook who never measures anything. Well, I've observed that people like that are so experienced, and do the same thing over so often that they measure with their eye without realizing it. And I've noticed also they generally reach for one particular old cracked teacup when they go to make a certain kind of cake. And maybe they don't mind if things don't turn out exactly alike every time.

I understand that in a very famous chain of restaurants, a cook is dismissed if she is caught making a dish without the printed recipe before her. Or if she fails to weigh and measure her ingredients. They take no chances on cooking by instinct there.

But Mr. Everett, I'm sure my time must be up, and you're just too polite to give me the signal.

MR. EVERETT: No, Miss Van Deman, you're hitting it right on the nose. It's been a pleasure to take Morse Salisbury's place on the program with you today. Thank you, ma'am, come again.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, I'll do that.

MR. EVERETT: And now as Miss Van Deman is leaving the microphone and our next speaker is getting settled, I want to repeat that offer. Anybody who is interested in starting a home economics library for some young housekeeper, can send to the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture for a list of their printed publications, and order 10 of them free.

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